

NEW YORK TIMES
24 January 1985

CBS Jury Told of C.I.A. 'Sellout' in '67

By M. A. FARBER

George W. Allen, a former deputy chief of Vietnamese affairs for the Central Intelligence Agency, testified yesterday that the C.I.A. had "sold out" to the military in 1967 on the issue of enemy strength in South Vietnam and that President Lyndon B. Johnson had been given a "dishonest and misleading" estimate that fall.

Mr. Allen said in Federal District Court in Manhattan that Gen. William C. Westmoreland was "ultimately responsible" for "this prostitution" and that the C.I.A., by "going along with it," had "sacrificed its integrity on the altar of public relations and political expediency."

As a result, Mr. Allen testified, Washington was left "essentially with an inadequate understanding of what we were up against" in Vietnam.

During the Tet offensive of January 1968, Mr. Allen said, "the chickens came home to roost." He estimated that at least 400,000 armed troops took part in that attack — perhaps 100,000 more than the total enemy acknowledged by the military and the C.I.A. at that time. Mr. Allen said that, during 1967, he and some C.I.A. colleagues had actually argued for an enemy force estimate of about 500,000.

Mr. Allen, who retired from the C.I.A. in 1979 but still works under contract there, appeared as the second witness for CBS in the trial of General Westmoreland's \$120 million libel suit against the network.

25-Page Estimate for President

The suit stems from a 1982 CBS documentary — "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception" — which charged that the general's command engaged in a "conspiracy" in 1967 to show progress in the war by minimizing the size and nature of North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces. As part of this "conscious effort," the broadcast said, General Westmoreland removed the Vietcong's part-time, hamlet-based self-defense forces from the listing of enemy strength known as the order of battle and refused to allow a current count for them in the 25-page special estimate for the President in November 1967.

Mr. Allen — who testified Tuesday afternoon that the self-defense forces might have accounted for as much as

40 percent of American casualties in Vietnam — said yesterday that it was a "lie" that those units could not be counted accurately.

"We existed," he said, "to make estimates."

Mr. Allen seemed on the verge of laying part of the blame for the C.I.A.'s "sellout" on Richard Helms, who was then Director of Central Intelligence and who signed the estimate for the President.

Mr. Helms, he said at one stage, "made it clear to our staff that he was not prepared..." Judge Pierre N. Leval cut the witness off and called the lawyers to the bench for a private conference. Later, Mr. Allen said only that he heard Mr. Helms "express himself on more than one occasion" about the conflict with the military over the figures.

Mr. Helms is not expected to testify at this trial. In a pre-trial affidavit solicited by General Westmoreland's lawyers, he said that the "disagreement" over enemy strength was not "fundamental to the conduct of the war," that he was under no pressure from "the military or any other source" to accept low numbers and that the estimate he signed "represented the highest quality of intelligence analysis given the 'softness' of much of the data."

Mr. Allen said that, in 1975, when a Congressional inquiry was conducted into the dispute, he was told by William Colby, who had succeeded Mr. Helms, to be "guarded" in his House testimony.

Mr. Allen recalled driving to Capitol Hill with Mr. Colby and others on the day of their appearance. Mr. Colby, he said, looked at him and said he "didn't want to put ourselves in the position of attacking the military."

"I now see very clearly it was a whitewash," Mr. Allen told the jury, "and I regret I conformed." The C.I.A., he said, wanted to "sweep" the earlier conflict "under the rug."

General Westmoreland, who commanded American forces in Vietnam from January 1964 to June 1968, contends that CBS defamed him by saying he had lied to the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff about the true size of the enemy.

The general denied a charge on the broadcast that he had imposed an "ar-

bitrary ceiling" of 300,000 on reports of enemy strength. He testified that he deleted the self-defense forces — newly estimated at 120,000 by his intelligence chief in 1967 — because he believed that they were insignificant militarily and that their inclusion at a higher number in the order of battle or the estimate for the President would be misleading.

Until the summer and fall of 1967, when the C.I.A. and the military quarreled over a new estimate, the military listed the enemy size at 298,000, including about 70,000 self-defense forces and the Vietcong's political cadre as well. The new estimate — which George Carver, who was then chief of Vietnamese affairs for the C.I.A., has testified was a "compromise" — put enemy military strength at 223,000 to 248,000, excluding the self-defense forces. Moreover, the political cadre was relegated to a separate listing, numbered at 85,000.

Yesterday, in response to a question by Judge Leval, Mr. Allen questioned the diversion of the political cadre. "They were armed and part of the enemy's command and not just a group of politicians carrying weapons," he said. "They would fit the term paramilitary, as I construe the term."

Earlier in the 15-week-old trial, Lieut. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, retired director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, testified that only 85,000 to 90,000 enemy troops took part in the Tet offensive. Other witnesses for General Westmoreland used a similar figure.

But Mr. Allen said yesterday that his figure of 400,000 troops was based on a trip he made to Vietnam in February 1968 with Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Philip Habib, a State Department official. The military's estimate for the units in the January offensive, Mr. Allen told the jury, was "a gross understatement" and excluded hundreds of assaults on hamlets by forces not listed in the order of battle.

Mr. Allen said he learned on his trip that in one region in Vietnam, where an intelligence officer in the field had reported that all but 3 of 33 enemy battalions had been wiped out before Tet — with the remaining 3 "cowering in sanctuary in Cambodia" — 45 battalions actually participated in the offensive "at essentially full strength."



The New York Times/Marilyn Church

George W. Allen testifying yesterday at libel trial.

"In essence," he testified, "not only had 30 of them not been wiped out, but the 33 had been reinforced by 12 more."

Mr. Allen, who was calm and deliberate through most of his testimony, suddenly became agitated when he recalled an incident in April 1968 involving General Graham, who was then a colonel in General Westmoreland's command.

By that time, Mr. Allen said, the C.I.A. had "broken the constraints" of the military and was insisting, at a conference in Washington, on higher enemy force estimates. But Colonel Graham, he said, "embarked on another rambling attempt" to portray the self-defense forces as old women and boys "and not important."

Leaning forward in the witness chair and nearly shouting, Mr. Allen said he had challenged the point.

"You don't really believe that," he recalled remarking.

"Of course I don't, but it's the command position and I'm sticking with it," he said the colonel replied.

"That example of intellectual prostitution," Mr. Allen told the jury, was "a low point of my career — I left the conference."